

VAL Staff Meeting  
2/26/10

1. Announcements:

- Cindy will be out on vacation for the next two weeks, beginning 3/1.
- Employee Emergency Information forms: Please return completed forms to Luke in H.R. and get a copy to Cindy A.S.A.P.
- US Census 2010:
  - There is a push for all forms to be filled out.
  - A teaching guide to prepare English language learners for the census, called the Adult ESL Kit, is available from the Census Bureau. (Cindy has a sample kit and contact info.)
- Funding:
  - General funding for adult education is decreasing, but specific funds earmarked for transitions are available
  - In partnership with AALV, VAL has applied for three grants toward Work Readiness for immigrant and refugee populations (through the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the office of Sen. Bernie Sanders) and has secured one for \$20K (People's Foundation). Total grant money would amount to \$150K.
  - VAL has applied for Dollar General grant money to aid YouthBuild in its work with WorkKeys and KeyTrain.
- Joey sent a card thanking folks at VAL for the sendoff we gave her. (Frank has it.)
- Beth celebrated her birthday in February. – Congratulations, Beth!

2. Wellness: Not much going on here. Don't forget to do your crossword puzzles.

3. Graduation:

- When: The week of June 7<sup>th</sup> (to avoid conflict with BHS's graduation the following week)
- Where: Most likely Elley-Long
- Think about students who might speak at ceremony.
- Try to help students finish before this date.
- Discussed possibility of having an additional graduation ceremony for those students finishing in August.

Volunteer Appreciation:

- What: Breakfast or lunch; no big event
- When: Last two weeks of April
- Where: On site, so volunteers can be together with students with whom they have been working

4. March 26<sup>th</sup> – All Staff Meeting/Retreat:

- Where: Vermont College of Fine Arts (formerly Vermont College) in Montpelier
- Who: VAL staff, Board members, Student Advisory Board

- What: Opportunity to give input on where folks want VAL to go and what we need to do to get there
- Mandatory for all VAL employees
- Carpooling to the meeting will be discussed at a later date.

##### 5. Follow-Up from January Staff Meeting – Steps toward Transitions:

Staff members shared measures they have taken or intend to take toward integrating preparation for transition to work and post-secondary education into existing services. Steps (cited roughly in the order in which they were imparted) include the following:

- KeyTrain: 40 students in AEL are already using this to supplement instruction; results have been positive thus far (Frank et al); several ESOL teachers are interested in implementing KeyTrain in their classes; introductory sessions will be offered downtown (Chris)
- Development and implementation of Work Readiness curriculum modules, including a fifth module (Kathy, Kris, Louis) that addresses résumé and cover letter writing and job search skills
- career search materials: identification of students' skills and interests and how these intersect with each other and with specific careers (Kathy)
- combining skill-building with career exploration by locating and using texts (at students' reading level) that focus on careers and occupations (Stan)
- training existing volunteers to work with students on KeyTrain (Louis)
- incorporation of occupational vocabulary-building activities for lower-level ESOL students into regular instruction (Louis)
- teacher-facilitated student discussion of the language of customer service and other work-related topics (Kris)
- shifting students' mindsets from reliance on transitional public assistance (such as Reach Up) to work as a responsibility and real possibility (Carmine)
- trying to help clients narrow their focus and set realistic goals (Linda)
- working with students to create a transition plan that is broken down into action steps, in which students are asked to think in greater depth about their goals and what they need to do to reach them (Toni)
- continuing to incorporate units on work that have relevance for students (Brian)
- possibility of offering another resume building class (Brian, perhaps in collaboration with Kris)
- employability assessments (Sabine)
- taking advantage of professional development opportunities focusing on the use of technology in the classroom (Brett)
- working closely with hospital administrators, supervisors, etc. to tailor generic workplace curriculum to specific requirements of occupation and employer, i.e., FAHC, and to help provide student workers a path toward career advancement, e.g., LNA program, GED support (Beth)

Update on GED program at FAHC: A survey of employees was done and there are 17 potential candidates; employees will be reimbursed for testing fee; there are still many unknowns to work out.

6. Budget and Purchasing:

Spending freeze: Beginning Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be a freeze on spending and hiring. The freeze comes one month earlier than usual this year.

- Frank or Cindy will have to sign off on all potential purchases.
  - Please be extra conscientious about spending requests, and prepare to be interrogated.
- ☺

7. Program Updates and Successes: This did not occur beyond sharing around item #5.

8. Next Staff Meeting: April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Technology-Related Proposals (to accommodate and take advantage of push toward technology in education):

- Future funding for laptops to provide students with home access to digitized curricula (Kathy)
- Use of CCV computer lab for all VAL students using KeyTrain (Frank)
- Use of electronic meeting technology to facilitate long-distance collaboration amongst VAL staff members (Kris)

Also briefly discussed:

- WebEx as an option currently used at VAL (to a minimal extent) that allows users to communicate and share documents synchronously
- Skype and Google Docs as free alternatives that lack the dual functionality

Miscellaneous Proposals:

- Possibility of assessing students' readiness and willingness to learn prior to VAL enrollment (Frank)
- Possibility of tighter screening to allow for greater student achievement (resulting from smaller class size, etc.) and for reporting of greater level gains (Cindy)

Resources:

- Webinar on emerging technology (off digital airwaves as of 2/28); Frank will get PowerPoint to Heather to post on the Wiki
- Mindquest software for high level, college bound learners (where/how to access this?)
- Career awareness curriculum put out by the Massachusetts DOL; contains many activities, including rephrasing of life skills as work skills (see Jenny)
- [Welcomeback.org](http://Welcomeback.org): program and website with resources for immigrant health professionals wishing to return to work in their field

Respectfully submitted by Brett